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SUBJECT: DECEMBER COLOMBIA STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVE UPDATE

REF: 09 BOGOTA 3593; 09 BOGOTA 2787; 09 BOGOTA 3617
09 BOGOTA 3968 AND PREVIOUS

Summary

1. (SBU) Vice Minister of Defense Sergio Jaramillo's resignation leaves the USG without a key National Consolidation Plan (PNC) interlocutor and the GOC lacking a chief PNC strategist and spokesperson. Post is engaging GOC leaders to focus their attention on consolidation in light of upcoming elections and possible government transition. Local political leaders are lobbying for inclusion of their regions in Colombia Strategic Development Initiative (CSDI) priority zones. The GOC approved additional funding for two additional Justice Houses to provide basic social and legal services to vulnerable populations. Elections and political process work has begun in Montes de Maria through the AID-supported Consortium for Electoral and Political Process Support (CEPPS). Post is inviting the Dutch, Canadians and Germans to participate in CSDI coordination meetings to demonstrate progress and encourage international donors to support consolidation in concert with the USG. The Colombian Military acknowledged its shared responsibility for countering the threat of emerging criminal bands (BACRIM). Leading daily El Tiempo published two feature articles in rare consolidation press coverage. End Summary.

GOC's Consolidation Champion Resigns,
Post Engaging GOC Leadership

2. (SBU) Vice Minister of Defense Sergio Jaramillo announced his resignation on December 17 (ref A). With his departure, the USG loses a key CSDI interlocutor and the GOC its chief strategist and champion of the National Consolidation Plan (PNC). Post has developed an engagement strategy with GOC stakeholders to cultivate the next Jaramillo, focus civilian agency attention on consolidation and press for needed improvements in PNC implementation. With elections and a possible government transition looming, the CSDI working group is working to protect

USG investment in the PNC, its sustainability and progress achieved to date.

Governors and Legislators Lobby to Be Part of CSDI

13. (SBU) CSDI and the PNC focus limited resources and efforts on the most important conflict zones in order to achieve lasting and comprehensive results. As Post's CSDI strategy becomes better known, governors and members of congress representing departments outside CSDI areas have lobbied the Embassy for inclusion. Examples include a member of congress who said that intensive aerial eradication campaigns have made many communities ready for voluntary eradication programs and a governor that advocated for support to protect security and economic development gains made in his department. While the Embassy has national level programs to address some of these requests, most resources are necessarily directed at CSDI/PNC regions. CSDI encourages the Center for the Coordination of Integrated Action (CCAI, the GOC's PNC coordinating mechanism) to review and prioritize local requests based on a holistic picture of the PNC and national needs.
GOC Approves Funding for More Justice Houses

14. (U) Justice Houses constitute an important part of AID's democracy program and provide basic legal and social services to local communities. The projects are developed jointly by local authorities, the GOC Ministry of Interior and Justice (MOIJ) and AID. As part of Colombian nationalization of AID's justice program, the MOIJ-administered Security and Coexistence Fund approved a Colombian contribution of \$820,000 for the construction of Justice Houses in Turbo and Apartado, both in the Department of Antioquia. (Note: The Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia -- FARC -- attacked a U.S.-funded justice house in August (ref B). End Note.)

CEPPS Launches Programs in Montes de Maria

15. (U) Under AID direction, the Consortium for Electoral and Political Process Support (CEPPS) has begun elections and political process work in Montes de Maria. The National Democratic Institute (NDI) started political party and civil society strengthening. NDI found that political parties have very little local representation in Montes de Maria, and those local entities that exist seem disconnected from departmental and national party structures. NDI also initiated a civic education campaign with civil society organizations to encourage political participation. NDI worked with a Colombian NGO, the Electoral Observation Mission (MOE), to establish a local network of civil society organizations to conduct electoral observation for the upcoming national elections.

16. (U) The International Republican Institute (IRI) is working in Bolivar department to implement departmental legislation directing the creation of a public policy for Afro-Colombians. IRI and the Afro-Colombian Congressional Caucus supported the passage of the legislation in the departments of Bolivar, Sucre and Cordoba. The laws seek to strengthen the engagement of Afro-Colombians in local government decision-making processes and provide for special public policies benefitting the social, economic, political, territorial, and cultural needs of this population (28% of Bolivar, 16% of Sucre and 13% of Cordoba according to the 2005 Census). The implementation process is still in the planning phase but the Mayor

of Cartagena has already expressed interest in supporting it.

International Donor Support for Consolidation

¶17. (SBU) Pushback from NGOs and home governments has led international donors to avoid supporting the PNC due to concerns about its reputed military emphasis. Donors, including the Dutch who have already funded over \$2 million in food security and income generating activities in the Macarena consolidation zone for communities transitioning from coca to the licit economy, seem willing to support the PNC's civilian aspects, but are waiting for others to engage in order to assure domestic critics that this is an internationally legitimated civilian effort. The Dutch and Canadians are the most receptive and are funding a study to create a "Friends of Meta" quasi-private association to foment private development in the Macarena consolidation zone. The Germans are also close to committing funds. Generally, international donors prefer to fund NGOs and other partners rather than the GOC, and

thus support consolidation indirectly through economic development. The CSDI working group invited the Dutch, Canadians and Germans to a briefing in January to outline the progress being made on the civilian side of consolidation and demonstrate that increased international community involvement can further advance that progress.

COLMIL Recognizes BACRIM Threat

¶18. (SBU) Colombian military (COLMIL) officials told MILGRP officers that they now define emerging criminal bands (BACRIM) as a priority threat to be countered. In the past, the COLMIL considered BACRIM solely a police problem and concentrated on guerrilla groups such as the FARC. Heavily armed BACRIM are responsible for considerable violence and human rights abuses in consolidation areas and the Colombian National Police (CNP) does not have the operational capacity to confront them in some rural areas. To assist this further military involvement in a crucial civilian safety initiative, CSDI agencies have discussed potential pathways to provide better training to military "first responders" to secure crime scenes and protect evidence to enable legal prosecution.

Rare Press Coverage for Consolidation

¶19. (U) Leading daily El Tiempo published two feature articles on consolidation on December 14 and 15, in what the articles themselves described as rare press coverage in Colombia. The first article explained the PNC concept, raised the problem of BACRIM in the Macarena consolidation zone and outlined advances made in Macarena communities. The second feature contrasted the Macarena experience with the Caguan River area in Caqueta Department. According to the article, security gains along the Caguan River have yet to be followed by consolidation and state institutions, resulting in an environment where the local community and military coexist but without mutual confidence or a sense of joint purpose. (Note: The Governor of Caqueta was recently kidnapped and murdered (ref C). End Note.)

FARC Threaten Mayors Involved with Consolidation

¶10. (U) Colombian media reported that around December 29th, the FARC 21st Front detained 70 people traveling between San Antonio and Chaparral in Tolima department, including the mayor of San Antonio, Isamel Cruz Neira. Cruz explained that the FARC told the group that the mayors of southern Tolima were "Uribizing" the territory and any cooperation with the national government made them legitimate military targets. Cruz believed the FARC were referring to the social investment of the Peace Commissioner's office, USAID and other Colombian government entities. The President of the Colombian Federation of Municipalities, Gilberto Toro, later said FARC communiques had threatened the mayors of Chaparral, Ataco, Rioblanco, and Planadas (the four PNC and CSDI priority municipalities in Southern Tolima).

NICHOLS